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LifeWay's Draper announces retirement

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP and local reports) — Trustees of LifeWay Christian Resources will immediately begin the search for a new president following the February 7 announcement by James T. Draper Jr. that he plans to retire from the position effective February 1, 2006. The search committee will include a Mississippi pastor currently serving as a LifeWay trustee.

"For many years I have asked God to make clear to me when I need to retire," Draper told the full board of trustees during its semiannual meeting. "My prayer has been that He'd allow me the strength to finish well, serving Him until He sees fit to bring me home. In that regard, retirement from LifeWay is simply a transition from one ministry opportunity to another. I believe there are exciting days ahead for both LifeWay and for me."

A presidential search committee was formed following Draper's comments. Members are Mark Anderson, pastor of Colonial Heights Church, Jackson; chairman Rick Evans of Alabama; vice chairman Phil Neighbors of California; secretary Ken Jones of Tennessee; Bill Henard of Kentucky; Melvin Pugh of Pennsylvania; Roger Willmore of Alabama; and Tom Woodson of Oklahoma. Ex-officio members are Wayne Hamrick, trustee chairman; Ed Ethridge, trustee vice chairman; and Bobby Welch, Southern Baptist Convention president.

"Our trustee meeting was a bitter-sweet experience with the announcement of Dr. Draper's retirement. I am saddened to hear of his transition next year but excited for the great things God has in his future. Dr. Draper came to LifeWay with unique and significant challenges facing him but was able to turn the company around and lead it

to incredible growth in every sense of the word.

"He has demonstrated the ideal role model as a pastor and leader of one of our convention's agencies. I have had the privilege of knowing Dr. Draper for most of my life, and it is such an encouragement to see his commitment to the work of the Kingdom all these years with godly character and integrity," Anderson said.

"The search committee now has the enormous responsibility of finding God's man for LifeWay. The culture at LifeWay was vastly different when Dr. Draper assumed the presidency. He was the right man at the time, but he cannot be replaced. We are asking God to lead us to the man He wants.

"I was somewhat surprised that in our first meeting as a committee not one person said they knew who should be the next president. All of us are completely yielded to the Lord. There is too much at stake to miss His will. I think each of us would simply ask all Southern Baptists to pray for the committee. We are excited about the future of LifeWay and the impact it is making around the world for the cause of Christ," Anderson said.

The committee will begin accepting resumes and recommendations immediately.

Deadline for having applications to search committee Chairman Rick Evans is April 15, and can be sent to his attention at Dalraida Baptist Church, 3838 Wares Ferry Road, Montgomery, AL 36109. Draper said an approximate timeline is for the committee to bring a candidate to the full board at its next meeting on Sept. 12-13 in Nashville, with the intention of approving the candidate as president-elect.

Draper said he will work side-by-side with the president-elect until February 1, when he'll step down and the new president will assume full responsibility for the position.

"I am looking forward to this process and to a smooth transition of leadership," he said.

Draper, who will be 70 in October, told trustees his decision to retire is borne out of his "love for LifeWay" and his "commitment to do what is best" for the organization and its Kingdom ministry. February 2006 will mark his 15th year as president, and he stated it is time for new leadership.

"We are seeing a great response in our effort to connect with younger leaders across our denomination," he said, "and we need a younger man who can lead this organization to continue that trend. The younger leaders are ready to be Kingdom leaders, and LifeWay

should reflect a full commitment to partner with them as they follow God's call.

"We need a younger man with great vision, one who will not rest upon the great resources of this organization and maintain the status quo. We need a younger man who sees future possibilities through God's eyes. We need a younger man who can guide LifeWay to be a relevant resource for the church for decades to come as the church faces tumultuous cultural times. One thing is certain: We cannot become what we need to be by staying the way we are."

Draper said the next president must lead LifeWay to engage six strategic challenges as LifeWay's ministry moves deeper into the 21st century. Draper said LifeWay must:

- Continue to grow in its understanding that it is a Kingdom enterprise.
- Intensify its effort to have a greater spiritual impact in the SBC and in the U.S.
- Continue to attract and retain the best and brightest people in order to sustain and grow the ministry and business.
- Operate profitably in order to remain a strong ministry and to continue being a viable competitor in the marketplace.
- Champion Southern Baptist doctrines and values and be a unifying force that pulls Southern Baptists forward and together as a denomination.

• Become successful at capital fundraising, recognizing that there are a number of ministry opportunities available to LifeWay that would greatly multiply its spiritual impact but currently cannot be engaged because they fall beyond the scope of LifeWay's operating budget.

"These are serious times and there is a desperate need for serious organizations staffed by serious people," Draper said. "LifeWay must be a serious organization as we move deeper into this century if we are to turn these six challenges into opportunities."

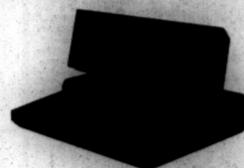


Draper



SEARCH COMMITTEE — Trustees of LifeWay Christian Resources appointed to the search committee that will recommend a replacement for retiring LifeWay President Jimmy Draper include: (front row, from left) Phil Neighbors, Rick Evans, Ken Jones, (back row, from left) Wayne Hamrick, Melvin Pugh, Mark Anderson, Roger Willmore, Ed Ethridge, Bill Henard, and Tom Woodson. (BP photo by Kent Harville)

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How far will science go?

One of the final hurdles toward the cloning of human beings was cleared on February 8 when the government of Great Britain granted a license to Ian Wilmut, the Scottish scientist who cloned Dolly the sheep in 1996 at Roslin Institute. We all knew this day was coming, and Wilmut's license is actually the second one to be approved by Great Britain's Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority.

Cloaked in the high-sounding language of humanitarianism — the clones will be used for diabetic and neurological research — the basic fact is that these developing humans will ultimately be destroyed and discarded when they become useless, long before birth. With an astoundingly smooth semantic twist, scientists have attempted to explain how it is that one life must be destroyed in order to save another life.

"Following careful review of the medical, scientific, legal, and ethical aspects of this application, we felt it was appropriate to grant the Roslin Institute a one-year license for this research into this disease," said Angela McNab, who directs the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority. No mention was made in McNab's statement about the cost in human lives.

"We are a step closer to medical research that has the potential to revolutionize the future treat of neuron disease," said Brian Dickie, a physician and director of research for the Motor Neuron Disease

Association in London. No mention was made in Dickie's statement about the cost in human lives.

Nor was any mention made by cloning supporters of the troubling, Frankenstein-like history of cloning. Even Wilmut has had to admit that Dolly the cloned sheep lived a short, painful life wracked by medical and other problems brought on by shortcomings in scientists' understanding of the process. Also, thousands of sheep clones went awry at some stage in the process before Dolly was created.

There's a special problem with science, which has otherwise lifted the human experience to levels that couldn't have been dreamed 100 years ago — or in many cases even 10 years ago. Science has no soul. Science is not imbued with ethics, integrity, or character. We should understand that fact as simply the nature of science.

It is the people who give science ethics, integrity, and character. The people can do that because God has given us souls. Science will go as far as people allow it to go. It can be based on ethics, integrity, or character, or it can be completely devoid of those qualities. It's up to us to set the standards.

John Nelson Perkins was a fine Christian gentleman who served for many years as a deacon at Darling Church in Quitman County. He was also my grandfather and had a profound impact on the course of my life. Some of my earliest memories involve rising before dawn on Sundays to go to the church with him to turn on the heating or air conditioning and make sure everything was in order for the day's activities.

"WELL, WE USED TO ATTEND THE CHURCH OF METAPHYSICAL LIGHT. THEN WE MOVED TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE NEW FULNESS. THESE DAYS, YOU CAN FIND US AT THE CLAIRVOYANT CONSCIOUSNESS. YOU WOULD LOVE OUR PROPHET. HE'S JUST AN OLD FARM BOY FROM ARKANSAS."



He eventually met a tragic end after suffering for some time from a painful and debilitating disease. Even as he was fighting so desperately for his life over so many months, as all of us would under similar circumstances, I cannot imagine he would have ever considered saving his life in exchange for the destruction of another life. He just knew better.

When we begin to decide for ourselves when life should be created, for what purposes life will be created, and when life will end, we are taking for ourselves decisions that belong to God alone. He spoke the entire universe into existence, and He created us. We are not our own; we are His. We should not presume for ourselves the responsibilities of God.

I believe John Nelson Perkins understood that, long before cloning was an international issue. Now that the debate is upon us, it's time the rest of us understand, too.

We just know better.

GUEST OPINION:



Get up to date with True Love Waits

By Richard Ross
Southwestern Seminary

join the church, but then wait three years before they are challenged to slip a promise ring on their teens' fingers.

Perhaps church leaders shy away from an annual promise ceremony because they don't want to ask a student to sign six cards while young. They have missed the point. We never ask teenagers to make multiple promises. In fact, it offends Christian students when they are asked to promise again. In their minds, their original promise was a promise to God and that promise stands to their wedding day and beyond.

The annual invitation to participate in a promise ceremony is made to middle schoolers who are being promoted into the student ministry, to all students who have made commitments to Christ in the previous year, and to

students who have joined the church and have no background with True Love Waits. Students who have made promises in previous years participate in Bible teaching on purity and attend the ceremony to support the first-timers.

No one places another card in their hands.

Few churches highlight international missions only once every few years. Few would decide to offer Vacation Bible School only once every few years. Churches give annual attention to those initiatives because they have kingdom importance. Those initiatives matter in people's lives — in the same way that a lifestyle of absolute purity matters.

We all are thankful schools are giving more attention to abstinence. Two or three health classes that present the advan-

tages of waiting are far better than what was done before. But that is no substitute for True Love Waits. At school, students make a promise to a program. At church they make a promise to God Almighty. At school Christian students can feel alone in their lifestyle choice. Through True Love Waits they lock arms with several million peers who live as they do. After the unit in school, no one offers much help until the following year. Through True Love Waits, parents and youth leaders provide instruction, warmth, and encouragement year-round.

During the Valentine season, tens of thousands of churches will provide beautiful, moving services and ceremonies built around promises of purity. Some churches won't. When churches go more than a year without inviting their teenagers to settle this issue before God, they are placing those kids at risk.

Maybe someone should place this on the agenda for the next church staff meeting.

Ross is professor of student ministry at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a spokesperson for the international True Love Waits campaign. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

Contestant serves as Baptist worship leader

GRAPEVINE, Texas (BP) — Although worship leader Jeff Johnson didn't make the next round for this season's American Idol competition, he believes God has a reason for the outcome.

"When I didn't make the cut, at first I thought, 'Why did I go through all of this? What was the purpose?' But when the show aired, it promoted my ministry to 30 million people. I had never thought of that. God was working the whole time," Johnson said. Under-scoring God's "perfect plan," he reiterated, "It's working out as part of God's plan for what He has called me to do."

Johnson is a member of 121 Community Church, a Southern Baptist-related congregation in Grapevine, Texas, and a full-time worship leader in various church and retreat settings. During the show's Jan. 25 episode, Johnson was shown praying with a group of contestants and, in a voice-over, he told of his ministry as a worship leader.

One of the celebrity judges, Gene Simmons from the secular rock group Kiss, subsequently suggested that Johnson sing country music instead of pop music — so the lyrics would not conflict with his beliefs.

Johnson said it was interesting that Simmons "was trying to give me spiritual advice, about not singing pop music. I believe we're supposed to be



Jeff Johnson

in the world and not of the world. I believe that I could sing pop music or country music and still live a life that's a witness for Christ."

Even though Simmons voted against Johnson, the other judges advanced him to the next round. Two months later, Johnson was among 200 contestants auditioning in Hollywood. Until the audition aired Feb. 8, Johnson was unable to disclose the results due to contractual obligations.

Since appearing on the show, Johnson has had numerous opportunities to share his faith in Christ while being interviewed on radio and television stations. In

addition, he has been flooded with requests for his worship CD, *Shaken*. Surprisingly, many of those requests are coming from non-Christians.

"Teenagers have sent me e-mails saying, 'I don't really listen to Christian music, but I wanted to get your CD because I liked seeing you on American Idol,'" Johnson said.

Johnson hopes when people get the CD, they will read the cover — which includes a testimony of what God has done in his life and a note about how others can have a personal relationship with Christ.

As for his upcoming plans, Johnson said, "I'm going to continue leading worship and just take one day at a time. I

want to see where I can best be used to glorify God. I never expected that God would put me on a reality TV show, but I am glad that I was able to use this as a way to honor Him."

Meanwhile, Kelly McCorkle, 2002's Miss South Carolina and a graduate of a Baptist-affiliated college in her home state, will be part of the seventh season of CBS' reality show *The Amazing Race*.

McCorkle, a 2001 North Greenville College graduate, will be teamed with her boyfriend Ron Young, a former Iraq War POW. North Greenville College is affiliated with the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

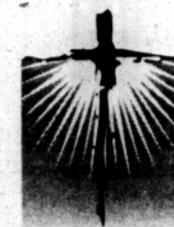
McCorkle currently works as a legislative correspondent for U.S. Sen. Jim DeMint of South Carolina. Young is a student at the University of Georgia and a motivational speaker.

After growing up with a learning disability, McCorkle graduated cum laude from North Greenville College. After winning the Miss South Carolina pageant, she was a top 15 finalist in the Miss America contest.

The race proved to be a life-altering experience for McCorkle. "God taught me so much about myself through the whole experience," McCorkle said. "I am really excited about the show."

In a pre-race interview with CBS, McCorkle and Young discussed their life experiences, their relationship and their thoughts on the upcoming race. "I think our strength as a team is that Ron and I are both very competitive. We hate to lose," McCorkle said. "So I think we are going to have the right attitude, the drive to not give up and go all the way to the end and be the first to arrive at the last stop."

McCorkle also talked about another factor that will help them in the competition. "Our life experiences will bring a lot to the table," McCorkle said. "There won't be anybody in this race that has been through what we've been through."



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BAPTISTS

THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

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Miss. Baptist chosen

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP) — A Mississippi Baptist is among the 2005 Acteens Top Teens announced recently by Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) auxiliary of the Southern Baptist Convention, headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama. Shaina Badon, a member of Mt. Olive Church, Smithdale, was chosen to be an Acteens Top Teen based on her strong involvement in missions. From a list of nominations of young women with outstanding missions support, WMU annually selects six National Acteens Panelists and then the longer list of Acteens Top Teens. "As applications for the 2005 National Acteens Panel poured in to the national WMU office from all over the country, the qualifications, spiritual maturity, leadership, and missions involvement of these young women were extremely impressive, making the selection process especially challenging," WMU, a Southern Baptist Convention auxiliary, stated in a news release. Acteens is a WMU organization for teenage girls in grades seven through 12 who are interested in missions and praying and giving to missions. In Acteens, members also grow in their understanding of God and of themselves and are engaged in hands-on missions opportunities in their communities and beyond. Applications for the 2006 National Acteens Panel will be due to the WMU national office no later than December 1. Applications will be available on the Acteens website at www.acteens.com and in the fall issue of *Acteens Leader*. Applicants for the national Acteens panel must be a current junior or senior in high school; be a Christian, a church member and a member of a local Acteens organization; be involved in *MissionsQuest* or have served as an Acteens Activator; be able to attend the Southern Baptist Convention the year they are on the panel; and have parental or guardian permission. For more information on Acteens, including how to start an Acteens organization in your church, visit www.acteens.com.

Looking back

10 years ago

A Southern Baptist study committee's recommendations would reduce the number of SBC agencies from 19 to 12, including a merger of the Home Mission Board, Radio and Television Commission, and Brotherhood Commission into a "North American Mission Board."

20 years ago

Colonial Hills Church, Southaven, presents *America, You're Too Young to Die*, a 75-minute multimedia production by Life Action Singers designed to awaken Christians to moral dangers faced by the country.

50 years ago

The second series of Stewardship and Extension Conferences, held under the direction of W. A. Keel, Secretary of Negro Work, are scheduled for Antioch Church, Hattiesburg, and Farish Street Church, Jackson.

IMB workers' child dies in accident

CHIANGMAI, Thailand (BP) — John D. "J.D." Pettit Jr., age 8, son of International Mission Board (IMB) workers John and Shannon Pettit, died Feb. 10 from injuries in a fall he suffered while the family was on a



Pettit Jr.

holiday outing in Thailand. The Pettits, of Spartanburg, S.C., serve in southern Asia.

J.D. was with his parents at a waterfall February 9 when the accident happened. He was rushed to a hospital critical care unit in Thailand, where he died the next day.

J.D. Pettit is survived by his parents and two sisters: Coralie, age 6, and Simone, age 10.

Funeral arrangements have not been announced. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to John and Shannon Pettit c/o Don Brown, 7 Bridgewood Ave., Taylors, SC 29687.

Appeals may be running low for Schiavo

LAKELAND, Fla. (BP) — For the second time in less than a year, the U.S. Supreme Court will be asked to consider an appeal related to Terri Schiavo, the brain-damaged Florida woman whose plight has pitted pro-life supporters against euthanasia advocates in a case drawing worldwide attention.

On Feb. 4 Florida's Second District Court of Appeals dismissed without an opinion an appeal that would have considered the religious liberty rights of Schiavo.

The ruling leaves Bob and Mary Schindler, Terri's parents, without many options in Florida, but does clear the way for their attorneys to take the issue of a disabled person's religious liberty rights all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. The lawsuit centers on the Pope's declaration last year that removal of a feeding tube is not compatible with Roman Catholic pro-life teachings. Schiavo is Catholic.

"We have been all along planning to do that," Barbara Weller, an attorney with the Gibbs Law Firm which represents the Schindlers, told the Florida Baptist Witness Feb. 9.

Weller said the Schindlers are doing "amazingly well" in light of the district court's ruling but saddened to learn their daughter's religious beliefs apparently are not taken seriously.

"We're just very disappointed that [the court] chose not to deal with such an important issue of the free exercise of religion, which is one of the most important foundations of our American government," Weller said.

She said her firm will continue to press for Terri's religious and due process rights, despite the refusal in January by the nation's high court to hear an

appeal on whether "Terri's Law," passed by the Florida legislature in 2003, was unconstitutional, as the Florida Supreme Court had ruled.

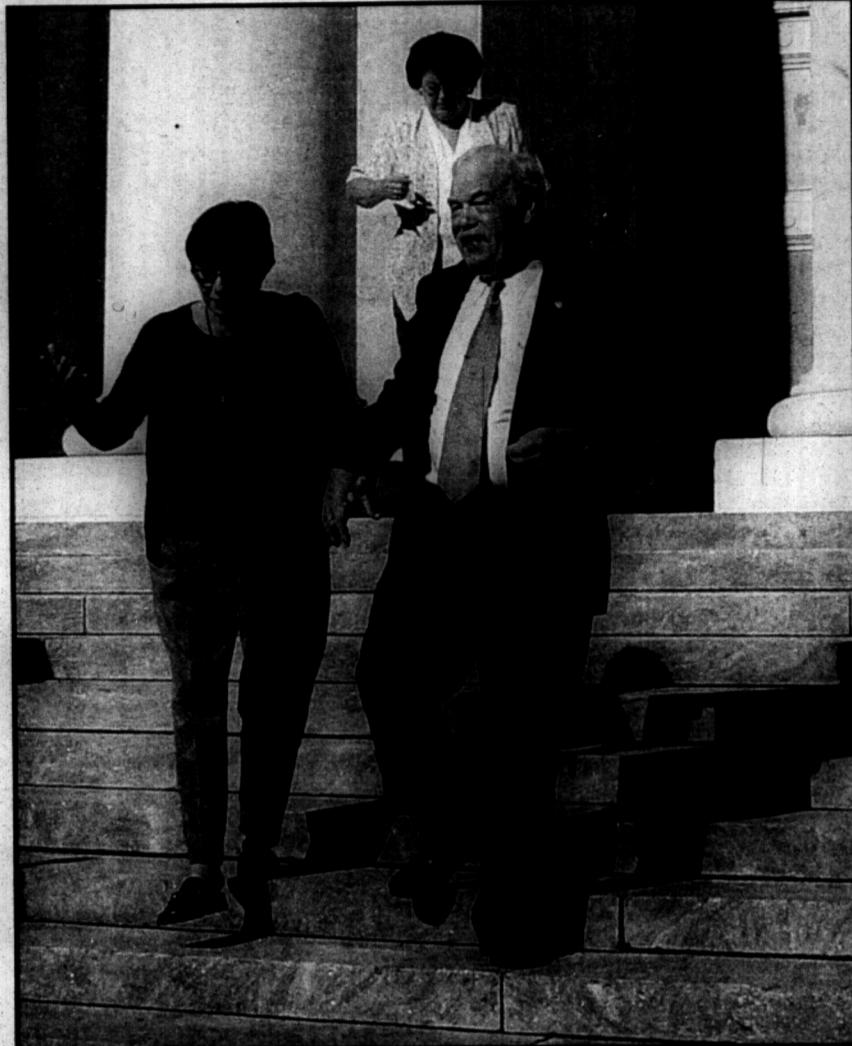
The Second District Court's decision, when it is finalized procedurally Feb. 22, will most likely end a current stay issued by Pinellas County Circuit Judge George Greer that is keeping Schiavo alive. The stay halts his 2000 ruling that said healthcare workers — at the request of Terri's husband and guardian, Michael Schiavo — could discontinue feeding Terri. Once her feeding tubes are removed, she will die by starvation and dehydration — most likely within 7-10 days.

Weller said she believes Michael Schiavo's attorney George Felos is incorrect in statements he has made to the press that healthcare workers will be able to begin the starvation process again Feb. 22.

"We still have other avenues of appeal," Weller said, explaining that since several courts are involved, her firm cannot request a stay in anticipation of another stay's expiration.

Greer is expected to rule Feb. 11 on whether another pending motion can proceed. It deals with whether Terri Schiavo's constitutional right to due process was violated when she was not assigned an independent attorney to represent her throughout the past six years.

Schiavo, an otherwise healthy 41-year-old woman, was found unconscious in her home in 1990, having suffered brain damage after her heart stopped. Some doctors have ruled she is in a Persistent Vegetative State. Others agree with her parents who say that with rehabilitation she might learn to swallow and be able to improve. Nutrition and hydration has twice been discontinued in her case and



ANOTHER HEARING — Terri Schiavo's parents, Bob and Mary Schindler (foreground), exit the Florida Supreme Court after arguments over the constitutionality of "Terri's Law," a measure to save the life of their disabled daughter, Terry Schiavo, from her husband's efforts to have her feeding and hydration removed. The Florida Supreme Court dismissed the Schindlers' appeal without issuing an opinion. (BP photo by Joni Hanigan)

restored only after court or legislative intervention.

A few years after her collapse Michael Schiavo won more than a million dollars in a malpractice suit against doctors, after which he ended communication with her parents and placed a "do not resuscitate order" with healthcare workers. He told the court Terri would not wish to continue to live in her present condition and barred efforts to rehabilitate his wife. However, no written request from Terri Schiavo exists.

Terri's parents have long argued that Michael Schiavo's continued guardianship of their daughter presents a conflict of interest. He has lived with his long-time girlfriend, with whom he has had two children, for at least nine years.

After the Second District Court's latest decision, Mary Schindler told the Witness she wasn't surprised, but was disappointed, considering the Pope's statements last year. Schindler and her family, including Terri, are devout Catholics who have said they consider the Pope's insight critical to Terri's case.

"I take each day at a time and think about it all of the time," Schindler said of the courts' various rulings and the possibility a court will instruct workers to discontinue feeding Terri. "I keep hoping this time it's not going to happen. So many people are aware that

she is just a healthy brain-damaged person. I pray something can be done."

Recounting a visit with Terri Feb. 7, Schindler said she appears to be doing well, though maybe a bit on the "sleepy side" due to medications she believes Terri is being given for twitching, which the family had observed several weeks ago. According to the Schindlers and their attorneys, Michael Schiavo previously has ordered healthcare workers not to discuss Terri's medical condition with them.

"She laughed and she started trying to vocalize again," Schindler said of her daughter during the visit to the hospice where she has lived for several years. "I just keep telling her the same thing. Just hang in there. You've been so strong so far. I know you can hold on a little bit longer."

Both Schindler and Weller said they are encouraged by a recent article in The New York Times describing a breakthrough in testing brain-damaged individuals. The article said those who have suffered brain damage may be able to "hear and register" their surrounding but be unable to respond.

"I thought they were talking about my daughter," Schindler said animatedly. "I absolutely think she should definitely have this test. Absolutely. I would love to see her have that test and see what she does when she hears our voices."

Nominees sought for MBC posts

Members of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) Committee on Nominations will soon begin meeting and reviewing the trustee/board member positions on the boards and commissions of the Mississippi Baptist Convention for 2006.

According to Lamar McDonald, committee chairman and member of Poplar Springs Church, Meridian, there are a limited number of vacancies to be filled on the following boards and commissions:

- Board of Ministerial Education
- Christian Action Commission
- Education Commission
- Historical Commission
- Mississippi Baptist Children's Village
- Mississippi Baptist Foundation
- Baptist Health Systems, Inc. (Jackson)
- Baptist Memorial Health Care System, Inc. (Memphis)
- Blue Mountain College
- Mississippi College
- William Carey College
- Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

The Nominating Committee will work in conjunction with the heads of the institutions and agencies in bringing a list of nominees to be approved by the messengers at the 170th annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention on November 1-2.

Nomination forms can be obtained by contacting Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), Executive Administration, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3201 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 201. E-mail: bbox@mcb.org. Completed forms should be mailed to the Committee on Nominations c/o MBCB Executive Administration at the above address, to be received by June 1.

ATTACKED BY A GIANT BIRD

One Sunday night after church I was almost home when my cell phone rang and my wife wanted to know where I was and how long it would be until I got home. I said, "I am almost there. What is going on?" She said, "Well, there is a bird in the house." I said, "How did it get in?" She responded, "Well, I just opened the back door, and it just flew in." Apparently, it had been in the garage looking around for food, nest materials, or something. Now in the dark it just flew toward the light when the door opened. I said, "Where is it now?" She said, "I don't know. It just flew in the house, took off, and I don't know where it's gone." I asked, "What kind of bird is it?" She said, "I don't know! It is just a big bird." I said, "Really?" She said, "Yeah, I mean when I opened the door that thing came in, I jumped, and it barely missed me. I don't know where it went." I said, "Is it really a big bird?" She replied, "Yeah, I don't know what kind it is, but it was big." I told her not to worry about it that I would be home in just a little bit.

At this point in the story the big bird that had attacked our home began to play games in Shirley's mind and in mine. She was at the house, wondering where the monster bird had gone, and I was trying to get home and was wondering what kind of awesome creature I was going to encounter when I got there. I wondered if it was a blackbird, a big blue jay, or maybe a red-bird. Maybe it was a hawk, a bat flying at night, or an owl. I even thought it might be one of those big Canada geese. When all this took place they were in the process of migrating, and I could just see one of them with a wingspread of five or six feet swooping around through the house. I thought oh well, maybe whatever it is it will not destroy too much before I can get there and either capture or kill the creature. The faster I drove and the more I thought the larger the bird grew. My wife was stuck at the house, imprisoned with this winged creature, and wondering if, when, and from where it would attack again. I began to think about Alfred Hitchcock and his famous movie, *The Birds*.

Finally, I arrived home, rushed into the house, and Shirley was talking on the phone. She pointed me in the direction of the room where the horrible, winged creature was believed to be. As I made my way toward

Directions



Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

the room and carefully started to open the door, I had no idea of what was lurking on the other side. Before I attempted to open the door, should I call the Humane Society, 911, or just call the local police and tell them to be on standby because I had no idea of what I was about to encounter? Well, I felt bad about doing any of the above without trying to handle the situation myself, and so I eased the door open and with eyes shifting from one side to the other, I analyzed the situation and looked for the bird. Finally, I spotted him. He was perched on a picture hanging on the wall. He was brown with some black markings and possibly could have weighed anywhere from one to three ounces. It was a sparrow. A small, defenseless, harmless, little sparrow had invaded our home. Bolstered by my newly found confidence to face this ugly creature, I gave a sigh of relief and began to think about the best way of going about capturing this little bird. He was scared to death and you could see his little chest throbbing. I quickly made some decisions about what I would not do. I rejected the idea of using a shotgun. I turned down the possibility of using poisoned food. I turned away from the thought of rounding up some cats and turning them loose on the bird. Once I saw the bird I realized that no one was in any immediate or enormous danger. No 911 call was needed. There was no reason to call out the National Guard. Slowly but boldly I went into the room. I was armed with a little net in one hand, a broom in the other, and was ready for mortal combat. Shutting the door behind me, I walked over toward the little monster. The sparrow, not being sure what to do, began flying back and forth across the room bumping into the walls and crashing into the flower vases. All I wanted to do was catch him and give him his freedom. He did not know that. After four or five minutes, I was able to get hold of the little bird and clutching him gently but firmly I took him out the door and released him into the darkness of the night.

I learned three simple little lessons that night that would help most of us get through each day. **Lesson number one was about fear.** I was reminded that fears seem to grow and take on a life of their own and become huge, grotesque monsters unless they are dealt with. God has not given us the spirit of fear, so do not allow it to move in and shake or shape your home.

The second lesson was about facts. As I was trying to get home and deal with the problem, I thought about just the facts of the case. One fact was that there are not many people-eating birds on the planet. In fact, I have never seen one. I suppose the only people-eating bird I have ever seen is a buzzard, and if he starts working on you then you are probably in a condition where you would not know or care. Another fact that came to my mind was the reality that birds aren't as big as people are. In fact, I outweighed this bird several hundred times. So the facts indicated I could probably handle this situation.

The third lesson had to do with faith. I thought about how quickly our faith weakens or vanishes. I had been in three worship services that day, and I had spoken to many people about how they could trust God and He would take care of them. When a little bird came fluttering into my environment, I forgot all about that. Why is he there? What am I going to do with him? Strange, isn't it, how soon we forget about faith's focus in every circumstance of life. Surely, if God knows when a little Sparrow falls to the ground, He also knows when a bird comes fluttering into my world.

I thought of the song "It Took a Miracle." The second verse says, "The Bible tells us of His love and wisdom all the way through and every little bird and flower are testimonies, too. It took a miracle to hang the world in space. It took a miracle to put the stars in place, but when He saved my soul, cleansed, and made me whole, it took a miracle of love and grace."

Indeed, it did take a miracle and each day in every way the Lord wants us to love Him and lean on His strong arms for care and protection even if our house is invaded by a giant bird.

The author may be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: jfutral@mbcb.org.

Bibliocipher

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SKF LGLFI NFLL RA
WDKCD EI YRA KCD
SFRN. SKF KS NYKFDA
VLD XK DKN PQNYLF
SRPA, DKF KS Q EFQVEBL
ETAY PQNYLF NYLI PFQMLA.

BTWL ARH:SKFNI-SKTF

Clue: N = T

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Matthew Twenty-Two:Thirty-Two.

Polish Baptist leader decries SBC meeting in Warsaw

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (ABP and BP) — The leader of Polish Baptists is expressing his "regret and sorrow" about a meeting, planned for Warsaw this summer, that at least one Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leader has described as an organizational gathering for "an alternative to the Baptist World Alliance (BWA)."

On Jan. 18, during an appearance in Washington on an unrelated subject, SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission President Richard Land mentioned the meeting in response to a question about the SBC's decision last year to withdraw from BWA, a world-wide umbrella group for national and regional Baptist denominations.

Morris Chapman, the SBC's chief executive, confirmed the meeting, but also said Land had overstated its nature. "To call the meeting with some of

the European Baptist leaders an 'organizational' meeting would be a mischaracterization," he told Associated Baptist Press. "Over the next several years we hope to travel to several continents meeting with like-minded Baptist leaders with the thought of developing a network or fellowship."

"With great surprise and sorrow rumors have reached us telling us that the Southern Baptist Convention is making plans to meet in Poland the same week of the Baptist World Alliance Centenary Congress in Birmingham, England, to organize a new alternative to the Baptist World Alliance," said Leszek Wakula, the Polish Baptist Union's general secretary, in a statement released February 10 by BWA officials.

"We would like to officially acknowledge that neither the Executive Board of the union

[n]or its members are aware of such a meeting in Warsaw or even of any plans for such," Wakula continued. "We express our regret and sorrow that if such a project is going to take place in Poland, then it takes place behind our back."

SBC leaders cited a perceived "liberal" shift in some BWA member denominations among their reasons for leaving the organization originally founded with the assistance of Southern Baptists. They also hinted that they might spearhead the formation of an alternative global Baptist network with other "like-minded" Baptist bodies, but Land's comments were the first public notification about the formation of such a group.

"We have no desire to compete with the BWA in its work," Chapman said. In fact, we hope for the BWA God's blessings in every work they do for the

Kingdom's sake and pray for them a meaningful and fulfilling World Baptist Congress in England this summer."

A global convocation to mark BWA's 100th anniversary is scheduled for July 27-31 in England.

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JUST FOR THE RECORD

Harrisburg Church, Tupelo, presents A Woman After God's Heart with Elizabeth George and A Man After God's Heart with Jim George on March 4, 6:30-9:00 p.m. (men and women), and March 5, 8:30 a.m.-noon (women only). Tickets are \$10.00. Contact Kaye Horton at (662) 842-6917.

An ordination service was held for Kevin B. Bishop, as pastor, and Chris Myers, as associate pastor, at **Lake Como Church, Bay Springs**, on Nov. 7, 2004. Shown are Bishop and Myers.

The Carey Chappell Quartet will sing at **Cedar View Church, Olive Branch**, on February 19, 6:00 p.m. Call (601) 895-2661 for more information.

Homero Trevino, pastor of the Hispanic Evangelical Mission of Union County, recently presented a check for \$1,000.00 to the build-

ing fund of **Hillcrest Church, New Albany**. Gerald Hodges, pastor of Hillcrest, accepted the gift.

The WMU Guiniviere Young Circle at **First Church, Jackson**, recently held a Christmas party for patients of the children's unit at the Mississippi State Hospital. Shown are April Harwell, Martha Embry, Nylon Stone, and Sara Hambrick.

Heidelberg Church, Jasper Association, licensed John A. Hays, III, to the gospel ministry on Jan. 9. Hays is a senior at Belhaven College and will graduate in May. Shown are pastor Bill Houston and John A. Hays, III.

First Church, Greenwood, hosts an On Mission conference from February 27 - March 2 with missionary speakers. Dinner served daily, 6:00 p.m.; Worship, 7:00 p.m. Participating churches include First Church, Greenwood;

Calvary Church, Greenwood; Ruleville Church; North Greenwood Church, Greenwood; & Riverside Church, Money.

Whitesand Church, Prentiss, recognized Abbie McRaney for her four-year perfect attendance record. Shown are pastor Charles R. Burnham and McRaney.

Yalobusha Assn, Coffeyville, will host Youth Fest '05 on Friday, Feb. 25, 7:00 p.m., and Saturday, Feb. 26, 6:00 p.m.; led by Jake Gullidge with speaker Kelli Jackson from Sturgis. For more information, call (662) 675-8732.

Sunrise Church, Carthage, is hosting a men and boys wild game supper Feb. 24. Featured speaker is wildlife writer Tony Kinton. For more information, call (601) 741-2225 or (601) 267-4156.

First Church, Edinburg, will host a singing featuring the

Gospel Echoes Feb. 27, 6 p.m. A love offering will be taken. For more information, call (601) 267-4250.

Woodville Church, Woodville, recently licensed Scott Hathorn and Brian Lees to the ministry. Both men are attending New Orleans Seminary. Shown, from left, are Hathorn, Gary Bunch, pastor, and Lees.

Copiah and Lincoln Associations will hold a mini-workshop for church librarians Feb. 19, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. at the Lincoln Association office. Instructor is Peggy Tacon, Media Library director at Dauphin Way Church, Mobile, Ala. The workshop is free; lunch is \$5 and can be paid at the door. For more information, call (601) 833-8111.

Calhoun County's associational missions director, Wayne Gullett recently took some pews

that were being discarded from their Spanish church and used the oak wood to build four new tables and thirty-two chairs to be used in the preschool department at **Ebenezer Spanish Church, Calhoun Association**. Pastor Gabriel Silva and wife Anna gladly received this labor of love.

Priceville Church, Tupelo, recently had a night of celebration by paying off the note on their family life center. Based on a recent survey, the church will continue to take up their building fund offerings to renovate the sanctuary. Standing is pastor Tim Tutor along with the active deacons. Seated are deacons who were active when the building program began.

Monticello Church, Lawrence County, exceeded their Lottie Moon Christmas goal of \$18,000.00 by \$1,286.32 for a total of \$19,286.32.

OBITUARY

Jimmy Kettleman, Jr., 45, died January 9 at Hospice Ministries, Ridgeland. Services were Jan. 11 at Highland Colony Church, Ridgeland. Kettleman was a graduate of Sharkey Louisiana Academy; Mississippi State University; and New Orleans Seminary. He served as pastor in Mississippi and Louisiana. He is survived by his wife, Cynthia; two sons, William Seth and Daniel Hayes; his parents; two brothers; six nieces; and one great-nephew.



Tables and Chairs for Ebenezer Spanish Church, Calhoun Assn



Kevin Bishop and Chris Myers, Lake Como, Bay Springs

REVIVALS

Carey Chapel Church, Red Banks, will host a revival on March 6-9, Sun., 6:00 p.m., and Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m., with Dr. Robert C. Pitman preaching and Andy Roe leading music. For more information, contact the church at (662) 851-7543.

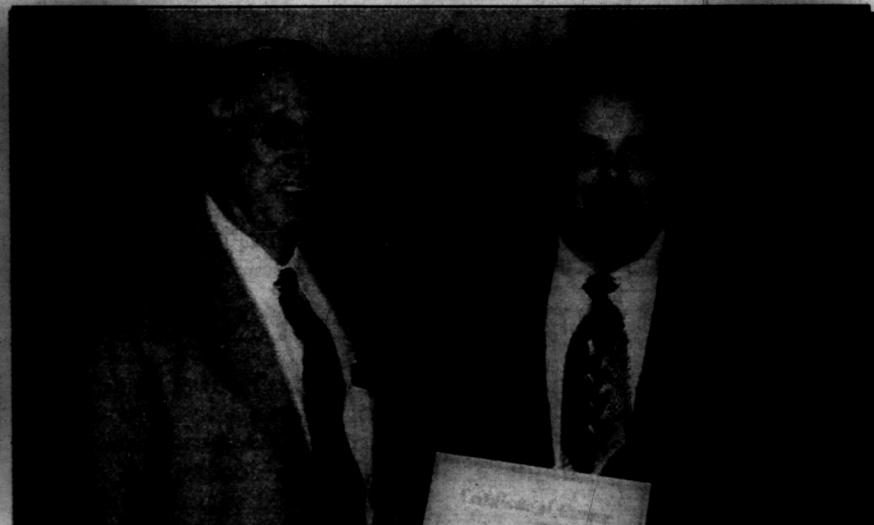
Tate Church, Tate, will have a Good News revival, Feb. 20-23 with Danny Lanier, evangelist from Meridian. Services: Sunday at 10:45 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed. at noon with a sandwich/soup lunch and 7:00 p.m. Tate's Celebration choir will sing and music will be led by Eric Barron.

First Church, Charleston, will hold a revival on April 24-27 led by Justin Peters of Vicksburg; music by Edd Brashier of New Albany.

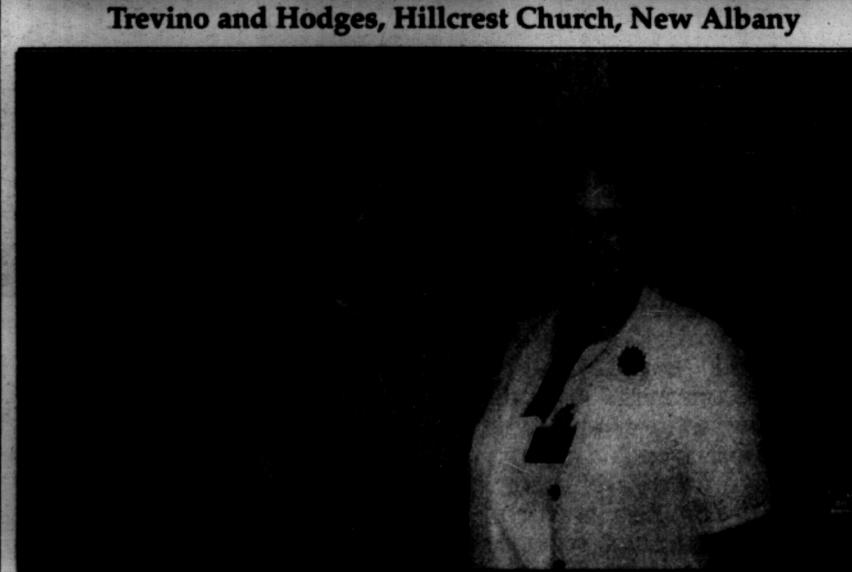
Parkway Church, Houston, will hold a revival on Feb. 27-March 2. Services: Sun., 6:00 p.m. and Mon.-Wed., 7:00 p.m. Speaker, Harper Shannon of Montgomery, Ala. Worship led by Ray Walker.



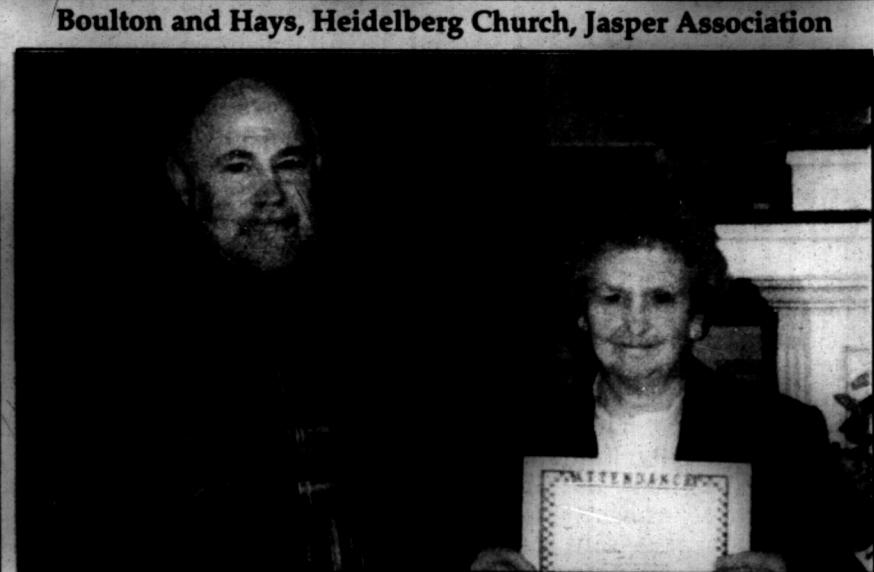
Trevino and Hodges, Hillcrest Church, New Albany



Boulton and Hays, Heidelberg Church, Jasper Association



WMU Guiniviere Young Circle, First Church, Jackson



Charles R. Burnham and Abbie McRaney

Jim Williams, director of the choral department, has been named interim director of the choir. He comes from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. For more information, call Williams at 318-6122, or William Williams, chair of the music department, at (601) 318-6122.

Music evangelist Price Hart has planned a service at 10 a.m. on Sunday,

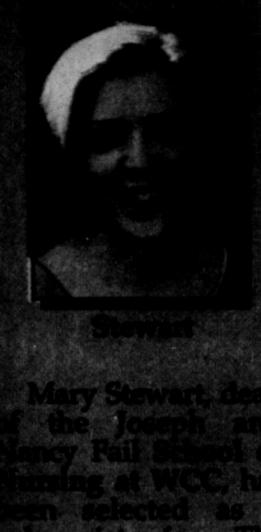


Larry Kenney & Larry Kenney, WCC



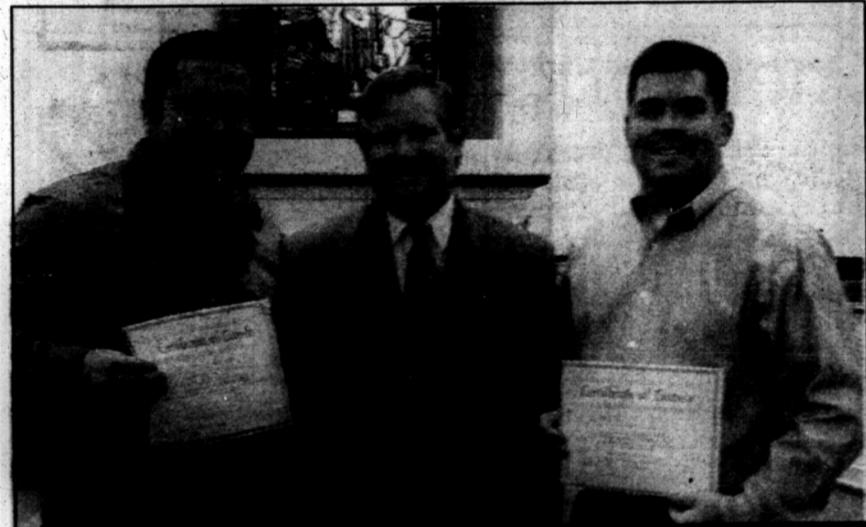
Concert The concert will feature works by Roux, Saint-Saens, Rossini, and Trepapier. Admission is \$10 and \$5 for stu-

dents. The concert is part of the Mississippi Guitar Festival Feb. 24-25. Competitions are open to guitar ensembles of any size and have three levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. A \$100 first prize and \$50 second prize will be awarded in each level. Also, a concert by festival participants featuring the music of Mangore will be Feb. 25, 4 p.m. Applications for competition are due Feb. 15 and the fee is \$30. For more information call (601) 318-6175.



Mary Stewart Mary Stewart, dean of the Joann and Nancy Ball School of Nursing at WCC, has been selected as a columnist for *The Journal of Perioperative Nursing*, a premier international journal for nurses involved in the care of patients undergoing procedures requiring sedation, analgesia, and anesthesia.

Math & Science Tournament Blue Mountain College will host its 2nd Annual Math and Science Tournament Feb. 24, beginning at 8:30 A.M. in the Paschal Student Center on the BMC campus. Over 230 students representing some 20 high schools in North Mississippi will participate.



Ordination, Woodville Church



Pastor and Deacons, Priceville Church, Tupelo

STAFF CHANGES

First Church, Charleston, has called James Beckley as senior pastor. Beckley comes from Antioch Church, Quincy, Fla., and holds Master's degrees from Southwestern Theological Seminary and Florida State University.

First Church, State Line, has called Ken Gibson as pastor. Gibson is a graduate of New Orleans Seminary and has pastored churches in Florida and Alabama. He and his wife Margaret come from Eastside Church, Union Springs, Ala.



Ken & Margaret Gibson

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White House pushes marriage amendment

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — The White House remains "firmly committed" to passing a constitutional marriage amendment during President George W. Bush's second term, despite a report in The Washington Post that quoted Bush as saying the Senate was not ready to pass such a proposal.

"The president will continue to advocate the need for a constitutional amendment to protect the sanctity of marriage," White House spokesman Scott McClellan told reporters. "It is something he believes very strongly in. In fact, he has already spent a lot of political capital on getting that initiative moving."

Bush's remarks sparked concern from some pro-family leaders that he was back-tracking on his support for a marriage amendment. In the interview with The Post, Bush said he believed that an amendment was "necessary" but that the response in the Senate has been tepid.

"They know DOMA is in place, and they're waiting to see whether or not DOMA will withstand a constitutional challenge," Bush said, referring to the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which gives states the option of not recognizing another state's same-sex "marriage. ... Senators have made it clear that so long as DOMA is deemed constitutional, nothing will happen. I'd take their admonition seriously."

McClellan said Bush was referring to the "legislative reality" behind passing an amendment, which would need 67 votes to make it out of the Senate. On a procedural vote last summer, it received only 48 votes and was filibustered. During floor debate a few senators indicated they could support an amendment if DOMA was overturned.

"[T]here are a number of members of the Senate that have said that they're not open to



Marriage:
One Man,
One Woman

the Senate but nonetheless made a "tactical mistake" with his remarks. "I have no doubt that the president is firmly committed to a marriage protection amendment," Land told Baptist Press. "In his interview, he was giving an accurate description of the current legislation situation, which unfortunately has the tactical result of giving senators who don't want to vote on this an excuse."

"The president needs to shore up any doubts that some may have about his commitment to this issue by using the bully pulpit of the presidency ... to make it clear that he's not only committed to it, but it's a high priority. This is extremely important because without the president's strong support it will not be possible to get the required two-thirds vote in both the house and the senate."

Land predicted that a marriage amendment to the U.S. Constitution will garner more support once a federal judge strikes down a state constitutional marriage amendment such as one of the ones passed by voters on Election Day. Federal lawsuits are pending against state amendments in Oklahoma and Nebraska. Once a state amendment is overturned, Land said, politicians won't be able to rely on a states' rights argument.

"The excuse that many senators and congressmen are using, that this is still up to each state, will have been proven false by raw federal judicial power," Land said.

Last December Sen. John Cornyn, a Texas Republican and a solid supporter of a marriage amendment, told the Associated Press that "we're going to have to see additional court cases come down" before sentiment in the Senate changes.

Land asserted that the president's position on an amendment is critical to his relationship with values voters.

it until the Defense of Marriage Act faces a serious legal challenge," McClellan said. "... But [Bush] remains firmly committed to protecting the sanctity of marriage and moving forward on a constitutional amendment."

Lawsuits against the Defense of Marriage Act are pending in federal courts in Florida, California and Oklahoma. Multiple lawsuits have been filed in Florida, including separate suits by homosexual couples who have received marriage licenses in Canada and Massachusetts. Amendment backers warn that the Supreme Court eventually will overturn DOMA, thus legalizing same-sex marriage nationwide.

Same-sex marriage is legal only in Massachusetts, although that could change this year if homosexual activists are successful in lawsuits that have been filed in other states, such as Washington state and New Jersey.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, said Bush gave an accurate description of the outlook in

MTV more obscene than networks

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — For years, parents have complained about the sexually explicit and vulgar content of programs on broadcast television. As it turns out, a cable channel marketed to their children — MTV — may be even worse.

A study released February 1 by the Parents Television Council found that MTV has considerably more sexual content and foul language than its counterparts on primetime broadcast television (ABC, CBS, NBC, etc).

The study — which surveyed 171 hours of MTV programming — found that the cable channel has an average of nine sexual scenes per hour and 8.9 "un-bleeped" uses of foul language per hour.

By comparison, the 10 o'clock (Eastern) hour on the broadcast networks has 5.8 sexual scenes per hour and 6.5 uses of foul language per hour. That hour, the final one of the primetime lineup, usually has more adult-themed programming — meaning that round-the-clock MTV programming is more offensive than broadcast TV's "adult hour."

According to Nielsen Media Research, MTV is watched by 73% of boys and 78% of girls ages 12-19, the study said.

"MTV is one of the major contributors to American popular culture becoming a pigsty," Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, told Baptist Press. "The gratuitous sex, violence and filth poured forth into children's minds and hearts through MTV is terribly damaging and destructive."

"... I cannot imagine that any parent — if they were informed about what's on MTV — would allow their children to watch it."

MTV's reality programs contained the most sexual content, according to the study. Its music videos had the most foul language and violence.

In fact, the study showed that MTV's depictions of violence were higher than that of broadcast TV. There were six incidences of violence per hour on MTV, compared to broadcast TV's 5.8 incidences per hour during the 10 o'clock time slot.

In addition to the 8.9 "un-bleeped" foul words per hour, MTV programming also had 18.3 bleeped profanities an hour, the study found.

"This should be a wakeup call for parents everywhere to take drastic action to protect their children's eyes and ears from this immoral indoctrination,"

Randy Thomasson, president of the Campaign for Children and Families, told Baptist Press.

Thomasson suggested that parents either severely restrict TV-viewing, purchase equipment to lock certain channels or get rid of the television altogether. "What I'm suggesting can be very good for families," he said. "When your children are raised on TV, they're not your children anymore. They belong to MTV, they belong to anti-family forces."

The study found that:

- The regular series *Room Raiders* — which airs during the daytime — has an average of 22 sexual scenes or scenarios per hour.

- The special *Spring Break Fantasies* had 32 sexual scenes in one hour.

- *Making the Band 2* was the most offensive in the foul-language category, having 52 obscenities (both bleeped and unbleeped).

- MTV's reality programming contains an average of 12.6 sexual scenes per hour.

MTV, Land insisted, influences the behavior of children and teenagers. "Television is built upon the premise that what



you watch impacts your behavior," he said. "That's why we have advertising."

Advertisers wouldn't purchase ads "if it didn't result in people purchasing their products," Land said, adding, "how much more of an impact does this unrelenting smut have on our still-developing hearts and minds?"

Thomasson said that too many parents — Christian and non-Christian — are "asleep at the wheel" and do not know what television programs their children are watching.

"To many, the TV has been used as a convenient baby-sitter," Thomasson said. "...It is the job of Christian parents to sacrifice what they perceive is good in order to choose the best. You either love TV or you love your children."

New China religion law not seen as big improvement

NANJING, China (BP) — China has announced that a new law governing the freedom of religion will go into effect March 1, according to Compass Direct news service.

The government first announced the new Religious Affairs Provisions on Nov. 30, according to a mid-December report by the New China News Agency. The NCNA, a government news agency, said the new law is regarded as "a significant step forward in the protection of Chinese citizens' religious freedom."

The NCNA further stated that the new provisions are designed to "deal with new situations and issues that have emerged in recent years with China's rapid socio-economic development."

However, according to the mid-January Compass Direct report, a detailed examination of the provisions shows that, with some minor exceptions, very little has changed in China's religious policy. In fact, it appears some of the new regulations tighten existing restrictions.

The new law consists of 48 Articles, divided into seven sections titled General Principles, Religious Bodies, Religious Venues, Religious Personnel, Religious Finance and Property, Legal Responsibilities, and Addenda. They lay out a comprehensive system to control affairs for all religious believers in China.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) first established

control over religion in the early 1950s through its United Front Work Department and Religious Affairs Bureau — renamed the State Administration for Religious Affairs.

The system ran aground during the chaos of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) but was reestablished between 1978 and 1979 and codified in Document 19 of the CCP Central Committee in 1982.

Now more than 20 years later, the new provisions reaffirm the dominance of the communist party and the mechanisms of control laid out in 1982, Compass Direct reported.

Beijing's overriding concern is clearly apparent in Article 3, according to Compass Direct. The article states, "Religious bodies, religious venues and believers must uphold the constitution, laws and regulations to safeguard national unity, harmony between the national minorities, and social stability."

Over the past two decades, the rapid growth of religion has alarmed party hardliners. Islamic separatism in Xinjiang, Buddhist nationalism in Tibet and Mongolia, the growth of Catholic and Protestant house churches, and the spread of religious cults such as Falun Gong and Lightning from the East have all combined to place the control of religion at the top of the CCP's agenda.

In late October as officials prepared to announce the new law, bloody clashes broke out

between Muslims and Han Chinese in Henan, China's ancient rural heartland.

Beijing's nervousness with its more than 20 million Muslim citizens is underlined by Article 43 of the new law, which authorizes China's Religious Affairs arm to "prohibit those who take it upon themselves to organize pilgrimages overseas." This clause is obviously designed to prevent Chinese Muslims from traveling to Mecca.

According to Article 3, the state "protects normal religious activities." However, "normal" and "abnormal" religious activities are not defined. The CCP reserves the right to make such distinctions.

Government registration for all religious organizations is reaffirmed in Articles 6, 12 and 15. For example, Article 12 states, "The collective religious activities of religious citizens must generally take place in religious venues which have been registered."

Article 7 sets forth continuing government control over religious publications. "Patriotic" or registered religious organizations are still restricted to printing limited numbers of religious books for their internal use.

Books with a religious content are still censored and must not promote "religious extremism." Again, what is "extreme" is presumably defined by the CCP.

Article 19, regarding the supervisory role of state officials, states, "Religious venues must accept the supervision and investigation of the Religious Affairs departments."

There are a few minor improvements in religious policy, according to Compass Direct. For example, Article 15 orders local government to respond within 30 days to requests from religious believers to register a



FRIGID CONDITIONS — In a rural registered church on the outskirts of Harbin, China, a crude stove does little to cut the deep winter freeze as worshippers gather to give thanks to the Lord. Leaders of Harbin's registered churches openly express concern about the future of established churches, often void of youth and young professionals. (BP photos)

new church or temple.

If implemented, this may help Christian believers cut through the often impenetrable thicket of bureaucracy when applying for official registration.

The New China News Agency claimed the government had spent six years drafting the new provisions, in consultation with "people in law, religion and human rights."

According to Compass Direct, it seems very doubtful that religious people outside the state-controlled patriotic associations were ever consulted. The results are likely to exacerbate tensions between state and party organs on the one hand and religious communities and individuals on the other.



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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Does God Want Me Back?

Hosea 11: 1-11

By Frances C. Graham

Hosea could be called the prophet of love because he constantly presented God's love as he tried to call Israel back to God.

In Hosea 11:1, we find the prophet reverting to history whereby Israel, identified as the child, was called out of Egypt. (Exodus 4:22) God identified Israel as "My son" as it was called out of Egypt to Canaan and provided both protection and sustenance. The same phrases are found in Matthew 2:15 when Jesus, God's Son, was called out of Egypt to fulfill the prophecy for which He was purposed. In both cases, God's purpose is to be the loving parent of both His people and His Son.

Now in spite of God's love and parenting of the Israelites,

they continued to forsake Him and chose instead the worship of other gods. (v.2) God acted as a parent to Israel teaching them to walk in His way and healing them in their times of trouble, (v.3) but they chose to take their blessings for granted and instead continued to sacrifice to the Baals. (v.2)

God used cords of man such as gentleness and love rather than the harsh reins that one would use to control animals. (v.4) He wooed them (Israel) constantly with His unending devotion to them. He never once forced them to serve Him.

Hosea speaks of judgment but he notes that it would not take the form of bondage back in Egypt. (Deuteronomy 17:16) Instead, they would fall captive under the Assyrians (This



Graham

happened in 722 B.C.) Because of war, Israel's land became desolate and they existed as a nation in captivity. (v.6)

In verse 7, one discovers that the people (Israel) were so determined to do their own thing (turn from God), that even if they called out to the Most High (God), none would exalt him.

Verses 8-11 demonstrate that God is not giving up on calling His people to Him. He recognizes that they must be punished but He is sure to never destroy His child. (v.8) God's pledge in verse 9 expresses that His mercy and grace will endure for all His people and they will return to Him in the later days. Based on the scripture, the children of Israel will return when God calls to them as a roaring lion. The "trembling" referred to in verse 10 suggests both an awe of respect and a joy of anticipation as the chosen people return to their Father.

God constantly demonstrated

His willingness to save His people. He sent prophets to His people such as Hosea, Amos and Jeremiah to bring His people back to Him, but living one's life for themselves is often the practice of the day rather than submission.

Now you ask how this lesson relates to those of us who are Gentiles. Think just a moment of the first words in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world..." God's love for us, both Israelites and Gentiles, is so great that He not only calls us to Him but He provides a means, His Son, by which we are able to secure a place in His kingdom for eternity. Love is not the basis of salvation but it is the reason that salvation is granted.

Just as God called His people Israel to Him, He also calls us to Him as well. He sends prophets/teachers to share His Word with us. He calls us and constantly pursues us to come to Him. He provided a means of salvation so that we could live under grace.

Also just as God did not force

Himself on the Israelites, God will never force Himself upon us. He is patiently waiting for us to unlock the door to our heart and let Him come inside. "Behold I stand at the door and knock..." (Rev. 3:20). God beckons us and wants us to respond to Him in love accepting Him as our loving Father.

What stands in the way? The answer is simple. Our own wants and desires keep us from God just as pagan worship kept Israel from God. We can be and often are just like the children of Israel turning our backs on God and focusing on we want.

What are we going to do about it? Some will choose to continue to backslide as the Israelites in verse 7. We can choose instead to open our hearts to God, walk in His way and fellowship with Him daily calling upon Him for our every need and He will be there for us.

"Praise Be To God Our Father!"

Graham is a member of Adaton Church, Starkville.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Jesus Offers Forgiveness

Luke 23:32-47

By Neil Gant

Every event that occurs is historical. However, not every event is historic. The significant ones are considered as historic. Such happenings as the signing of The Declaration of Independence or the horrible tragedy of September 11, 2001, are clearly historic. The event that is the focus of this lesson is the most historic of all time. This one event is the focus of all of history. That event is the cross.

PRAYING FOR SINNERS, LUKE 23:32-34

The Lord Jesus was taken along with two others to be put to death. Luke plainly stated "they crucified Him." He was treated as a common criminal. He was scourged. This act alone often brought death. What were

the terrible crimes of Jesus? His awful acts included opening blind eyes, making the deaf hear, causing the dumb to speak, healing the lame so they could walk again, rescuing souls from the possession of demons, and raising the dead to life. For all of that, He was taken and crucified. What did Our Lord do? He prayed for those who were involved. He prayed for their forgiveness. They did not realize the full depth of the wicked act. If they had they would not have crucified Him (1 Corinthians 2:8).

CHOOSING TO DIE, LUKE 23:35-39

As if the cruel mockery of the trials and the horrible agony of the scourging were not enough, the people sneered at Him as He hung on the cross.



Gant

Even after all of the miracles, they still wanted a sign. If you are who you say you are, then show us. How much more proof did they need? I wonder if the Lord had come down from the cross and did not fulfill the will of the Father in death just how many of them would have embraced Him as Messiah? I venture to say that many of those who opposed Him would have accused Him or the Romans of some type of trickery. Many still would have ignored His claim as Messiah and perished in their sins. He did not save Himself because He came to save His people from their sins.

PROMISING ETERNAL LIFE, LUKE 23:40-43

One of the criminals blasphemed the Lord Jesus and also asked for Him to prove His identity (v. 39). The next verse begins with one of the most important words in Scripture — but. The other criminal rebuked

the man and sought another kind of help from the Lord. He recognized that he deserved punishment, but Jesus had done nothing to deserve such judgment. Instead of asking to be free from his just punishment, he asked to be free from his sin. He requested that Jesus remember him. Here is a man who repents and believes. He received the great promise directly from the Lord. The repentant criminal had the assurance that on the very day he spoke to the Lord, he would be with the Lord in paradise.

DYING FOR OTHERS, LUKE 23:44-47

Most people, except those directly involved, did not think much of the crucifixion of three men on the outskirts of Jerusalem. They did not take much notice of the true Passover Lamb dying for the sins of all saints of all time. At about the sixth hour the sun was darkened until about the ninth hour. Obviously, God caused it. The severe darkening of the sun fell over the whole land. Land could refer to

Israel only, however, I think that the whole earth experienced darkness. The darkness is a reminder that the cross is a place of judgment. The end of the darkness is punctuated with the cry — My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? In that three hours the full force of the wrath of God was poured out on the Son of God. Then He died. The tearing apart of the veil proved once for all that the sacrifice of Jesus was a sufficient atonement for sins and that the way to the Holy of Holies was now open for all who believe in Jesus. The centurion was moved by the death of Jesus. His death was unlike any other he had ever witnessed. He heard Him cry out and saw Him breathe His last, not in a fit of fury, but with quiet and majestic dignity as becoming the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark seems to indicate that the cry itself affected the centurion — Mark 15:39. Have you been touched by the death of Jesus?

Gant is pastor of Pleasant Grove Church, Gore Springs.

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A portion of **The Village View** is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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M. Holladay
Miss Jean Gravas
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Mr. & Mrs. Tom Woodward & Family
Pat Howell
Mrs. Roger B. Johnson
Brownie Hulett
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Mr. & Mrs. Tommy Kornegay & Family
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Jana Jackson
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Madge James
Dr. & Mrs. Phillip B. Murray
Mrs. Wilmer James
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Jimmy Janos
Ms. Margaret C. Ashley
Mr. Glen Johnson
Lenoy, Sandra & Morgan Peoples
Mrs. Lorraine Joiner
Sarah & Glynn McLain
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Temple Mount treasures likely lost forever

J.L. Travis, BMC prof, dies at 81

James L. "Jack" Travis, long-time professor at Baptist-affiliated Blue Mountain College (BMC) in Blue Mountain, died February 13 at the North Mississippi Medical Center in Tupelo. He was 81 years of age.

Travis, a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University and New Orleans



Travis

Seminary (Th.D.), served as pastor of churches in Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Mississippi before becoming Professor of Biblical Studies at Blue Mountain College in 1960.

Funeral services were held February 15 at Calvary Church, Tupelo, with interment in Blue Mountain Cemetery.

Travis is survived by his wife of 54 years, Lucille Travis of Tupelo, one daughter, three sons, and 12 grandchildren.

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — Gabriel Barkay's excitement over new discoveries at the Temple Mount — the Jerusalem site that carries great significance to the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths — is tempered by the destructive events that led to them.

Barkay, professor of archaeology at Bar Ilan University near Tel Aviv, visited to New Orleans Baptist Seminary for a January 27 lecture sponsored by the seminary's Center for Archaeological Research.

"In November 1999, the Islamic authorities carried out a huge excavation of [the part of the Temple Mount known as Solomon's Stable]," Barkay said. "They built a modern entrance to the building instead of the existing entrance, and they dug a huge pit with the help of bulldozers and 300 [dump trucks] that removed the dirt from the earthen fills of this spot."

Barkay showed pictures of tractors demolishing structures dating to the Twelfth Century Crusades. The demolition went on without any regulation or archaeological supervision, he said. Builders at the Temple Mount took many of the ancient stones from earlier Jewish buildings and cut them down to make modern stones.

"Who knows how many inscriptions we lost in this way?" Barkay said. "Who knows how many decorated stones were defaced in this manner? The earth was saturated with ancient materials, and it was dumped in the Kidron Valley to the east of the Temple Mount."

Many of the Jewish and Christian artifacts dating to the Crusades and to the first and second temples were covered up, destroyed, or removed. In view of these developments, Barkay began to act.

"We formed a committee for monitoring what goes on at the Temple Mount," he said. "We take weekly aerial photos of it. Today there is much less activity. We're doing our best to protect every grain of dirt."

Just two months ago, Barkay put his archaeological know-how into action; he got a license to excavate the dumping grounds in the Kidron Valley.

"We began a project of collecting the dirt from the dumping areas. We moved the piles of dirt to a well-protected area," he recounted. "We covered them with plastic



PILLAGED PILLARS — Ancient pillars from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem have been demolished by Palestinians in recent years and dumped in the nearby Kidron Valley. Archaeologists fear that centuries of Christian and Jewish history are being systematically destroyed. (BP photo courtesy of Committee for the Prevention of Destruction of Antiquities on the Temple Mount).

sheets. Each pile was marked with the exact place of origin and exact depth we could estimate from which it came."

His team used sifting machines to separate stones from more delicate items. Then they began searching through the material by hand. "This effort already yielded some scores of coins," he said. "We have coins from the 12th century, the 19th century, up to the first century B.C. We have some second-century B.C. Antonian coins. We have some Herodian coins."

The team found a Christian charm bearing the image of John the Baptist with an infant Jesus and the Jordan River in the background. They found an alabaster dish from the Persian Period and an ivory comb from the Second Temple period. Though much had already been lost, the substance of what they are finding is encouraging amid the delicate and unfortunate situation.

What occurs at the Temple Mount is not merely an Israeli affair or a Jewish issue, noted Steven Ortiz, director of the Center for Archaeological Research. Christians have a connection to the situation as well.

"Christianity is a religion based on a God who acts," Ortiz said. "Because of that [the Temple Mount] takes on a sacredness, not because of the space it occupies but because it provides tangible evidence for the historical events associated with the life of Jesus."

Barkay prefaced his account of current events at the Temple Mount with an overview of its historical and religious significance.

Muslims believe the Temple Mount is the place where Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, ascended to heaven. On the other hand, for Jews and Christians, the Temple Mount is the place where the Jewish temple once stood and is the "center of spiritual and religious national aspirations of the Jews in Israel," Barkay said. In addition, the Temple Mount was where Jesus taught and overturned the moneychangers' tables.

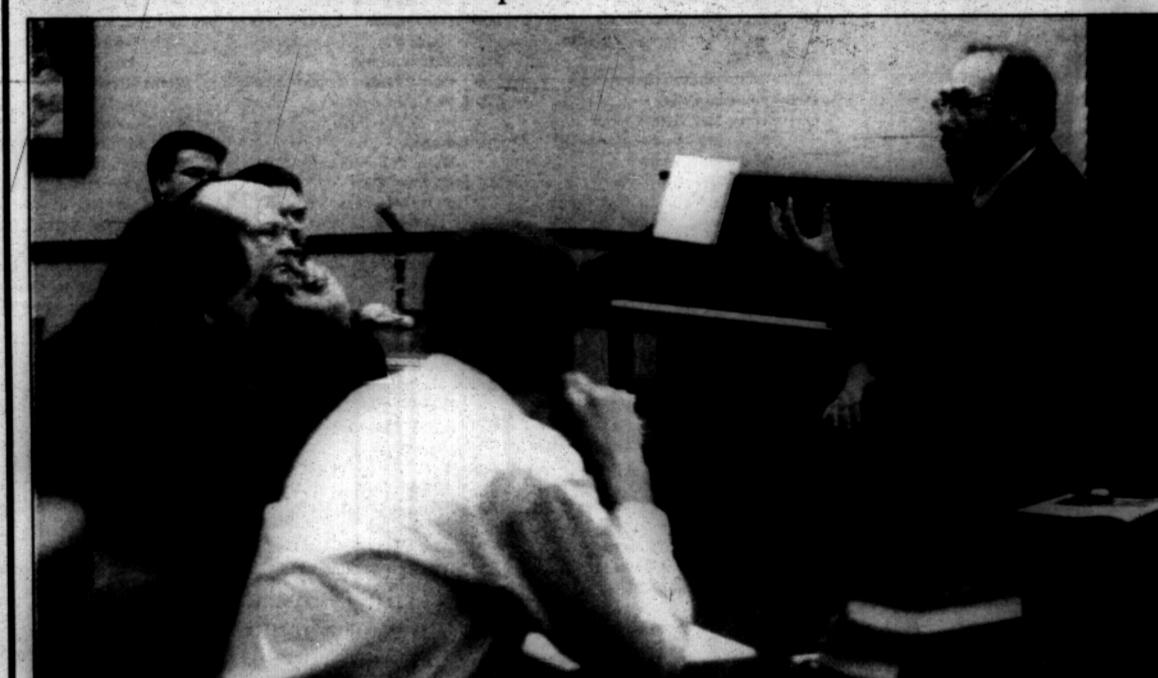
Jewish tradition holds that rock at the summit of the Temple Mount was the first rock laid down as the foundation of the rest of creation, Barkay said. The tradition holds that creation of the world began there. It is also at the summit of the Temple Mount where Jews believe Abraham, by faith, bound Isaac when God commanded him to sacrifice his only son.

On that bedrock, Solomon built the First Temple in the 10th century B.C. That temple stood for 400 years before being burned by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (2 Kings 25).

"After several decades, the decree of King Cyrus brought the [Jews] back from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem, and in 515 B.C., the Second Temple was inaugurated on the same spot," Barkay said.

About 400 years later, King Herod the Great initiated the next major building project on the Temple Mount. The present-day size and shape of the Temple Mount is a result of Herod's decades-long building plan.

The Islamic claim to the Temple Mount originated in 638 A.D. when Omar, leader of the armies of Islam, entered Jerusalem. Omar built a wooden mosque on the Temple Mount, and the present-day Dome of the Rock is considered to be the third most holy site for Muslims, behind Mecca and Medina.



TEMPLE TALK — Israeli archaeologist Gabriel Barkay (right) speaks about recent events at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem during a lecture at New Orleans Seminary Jan. 27. (BP photo courtesy of NOBTS)